

History of the District Court of Guam

History of the District Court of Guam

The District Court of Guam is a United States territorial court with jurisdiction over the Territory of Guam and sits in the capital, Hagåtña, Guam. Unlike United States district courts, judges on the District Court of Guam do not have life tenure. Appeals of the court's decisions are taken to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit .

District Judges

Paul D. Shriver Judge March 1951 to August 1959

Eugene R. Gilmartin Judge September 1959 to March 1961

Paul D. Shriver Judge March 1961 to September 1969

Cristobal C. Duenas Judge December 1969 to January 1991

John S. Unpingco Chief Judge November 1992 to April 2004

Magistrate Judges

Joaquin V.E. Manibusan, Jr. Magistrate Judge February 2004 - present

The first judge appointed to the District Court under the Organic Act was **Paul D. Shriver**, a native of Colorado. A hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee was held on Shriver's nomination on February 27, 1951. The unpublished transcript of the hearing indicates that Shriver worked in government in Washington, D.C. and Colorado prior to World War II; he served in Italy with the Military Government Division during World War II; and for approximately four years prior to the appointment to the District Court judgeship in Guam he served in the Philippines as General Counsel for the Philippine War Damage Commission.

The highlight of Judge Shriver's term was a case entitled ***Government of Guam vs. Hatchett***. There was no jury system in Guam's local courts at that time. A case was brought to court on an information, was found guilty by the court. The defendant appealed his case to the District Court Appellate Division, and his appeal was upheld. The defendant was freed, as well as other defendants in prison. The defendants had the right to jury indictment, not be prosecuted on an information.

Shriver served two four-year terms as the District Judge for Guam. Shriver's successor was **Eugene R. Gilmartin**

, of Rhode Island. After his appointment by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gilmartin's nomination hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee took place on August 19, 1959. The unpublished transcript of the nomination hearing indicates that Gilmartin had been serving as the District Judge of Guam under a recess appointment that began on October 17, 1958. Prior to that appointment, Gilmartin had served as the Deputy High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands for seventeen months. Before that, Gilmartin served in a variety of private practice and government positions in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.

Judge Shriver was re-nominated to be Judge by President John F. Kennedy which began according to court records in March of 1961 and terminated with the court in September 1969.

Judge **Cristobol C. Duenas** was appointed by President Richard M. Nixon on September 23, 1969 to be the next judge for the District Court of Guam. On December 10, he was confirmed by the Senate and commissioned on December 11. By December 24, 1969, he was officially sworn in as the Chief Judge of the District Court of Guam. In June of 1977, Judge Duenas was reappointed for a second term.

President George W. Bush had nominated **John Sablan Unpingco** to be the next judge for the District Court of Guam. The Senate then confirmed the Presidential nomination on September 24, 1992 and the nominee was commissioned on October 9, 1992.

An investiture ceremony was held on December 22, 1992 at the Pacific Daily News location on the 6th Floor where the District Court of Guam was located.

Judge Unpingco received a Master of Laws degree, specializing in International Law, from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; Master of Business Administration and Juris Doctor from New York University, New York City; Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri. The Judge was former U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General (prosecutor); former Command Counsel, Naval Warfare Center, China Lake, California.

After Judge Unpingco served eleven years with the Court, he resigned from office effective April 30, 2004.

The Honorable **Frances Marie Tydingco-Gatewood**'s nomination by President George Walker Bush, Jr., was announced in July of 2006. Judge Gatewood was confirmed by the Senate on August 8, 2006 and on October 30, 2006, she was officially sworn in to be the new Chief Judge for the District Court of Guam. She is Guam's First Chamorro Woman chief judge for the Court.

Source URL: http://www.gud.uscourts.gov/?q=court_history